

IN THE CLAIMS

1-27. (canceled)

28. (currently amended) A content server for distributing upgraded content data, comprising:

a network interface for receiving an upgrade request from a user for content data previously downloaded by the user from the content server as base data of a first format selected by the user from a plurality of predetermined base data formats; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format and the target format is from at least one predetermined upgrade data format determined to have an upgradable relationship with the first format selected;

a storage unit that stores user-related information indicating a format of the base data previously downloaded by the user when the base data is downloaded by the user from the content server, the storage unit having a user-related information section for checking the user-related information of the base data previously downloaded by the user stored in the storage unit;

an upgrading-data generating unit for generating upgrading data of the content data to upgrade the previously downloaded base data of the first format to the target format, the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user stored as the user-related information in the storage unit to determine the first format and then calculating the difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format; and

the network interface transmitting the upgrading data to the user in response to the upgrade request,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined

with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.

29. (previously presented) The content server according to claim 28, wherein the base data includes a header comprising content-grade identification information indicating the first format.

30. (previously presented) The content server according to claim 28, wherein the higher quality is at least one of a higher sampling frequency and a higher bit rate of the content data.

31. (currently amended) A personal terminal for the playback of content data, comprising:

a network interface for sending an upgrade request to a content server for content data previously downloaded by a user as base data of a first format selected by the user from a plurality of predetermined base data formats and receiving upgrading-data of the content data in response; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format, the target format being from at least one predetermined upgrade data format determined to have an upgradable relationship with the first format selected, and the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user stored as user-related information indicating a format of the base data previously downloaded by the user, the user-related information being stored at the content server when the base data is downloaded by the user, to determine the first format and then calculating the

difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format;

a content-data combining unit for combining the upgrading data with the previously downloaded base data, whereby the base data is upgraded to the target format; and

an audio-signal processing unit for playback of the upgraded base data having the target format,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.

32. (previously presented) The personal terminal according to claim 31, wherein the base data includes a header comprising content-grade identification information indicating the first format.

33. (previously presented) The personal terminal according to claim 31, wherein the higher quality is at least one of a higher sampling frequency and a higher bit rate of the content data.

34. (currently amended) A method of distributing upgraded content data, comprising the steps of:

receiving an upgrade request from a user for content data previously downloaded as base data of a first format from a server and selected by the user from a plurality of predetermined base data formats; wherein the upgrade request specifies a target format of a higher quality than the first format and wherein the target format is from at least one

predetermined upgrade data format determined to have an upgradable relationship with the first format selected;

checking user-related information stored in the server indicating a format of the base data previously downloaded by the user, the user-related information being stored in the server when the base data is downloaded by the user from the server;

generating upgrading data of the content data to upgrade the previously downloaded base data of the first format to the target format, the upgrading-data being generated on a user-to-user basis by reviewing a usage-history of the user stored as the user-related information in the server to determine the first format and then calculating the difference between the data in the first format and the data in the target format; and

transmitting the upgrading data to the user in response to the upgrade request,

the base data representing the content at a first quality, and the upgrading data being difference data that is combined with the base data to generate data representing the content at a second quality that is higher than the first quality, and

the difference data being formed by subtracting the data in the first format from the data in the target format.